

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1986 No 13 60p

BI-MONTHLY

▽ THE MAGAZINE FOR BISEXUALS



INTERVIEW WITH KEN LIVINGSTONE
COUNSELLING FOR BISEXUALS
BOOKS: YOURCENAR.
BISEXUALITIES RESEARCH
THE CULT OF THE BLACK VIRGIN

INFORMATION

Sorry

We apologize for the late appearance of this issue. This is due to production problems which we hope have now been overcome.

We have reluctantly decided to increase the price for single copies to 75p. At the same time the subscription rate for U.K. standard subscriptions will be reduced to £4.50 per annum.

The small increase in cover price reflects the many improvements that have taken place, with more pages, bigger features and better print, and will provide us with a sounder financial base to make further improvements in the future.

Classified

To reply to any advertisement write direct if a name and address is given OR if a reference number is given put your reply in an envelope and write in pencil BI followed by the number. Send this envelope stamped to: BM BI, London WC1N 3XX.

I am living in a cottage in Hereford and Hay-on-Wye in Herefordshire. Are there any bisexuals anywhere near? If so, please get in touch. I'm going to need all the sympathetic contact I can get. AL. BI 12:01

If anyone is interested in setting up a Bisexual Group in Hull, please contact Wolfgang. BI 12:02

Are there any bisexuals at the University of East Anglia? I'm feeling isolated. BI 12:03

Is anyone interested in setting up a Bisexual Group in Glasgow? If so, please contact GBG, PH7, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

The Older Lesbians and Bisexual Women's Group is a non-scene group that meets for meals etc. in London SW1. Telephone (01) 979-0695 (between 6 - 8pm)

Bisexual architect, living in attractive house in beautiful rural part of Ireland offers free holiday accommodation to individuals or couples in return for friendly companionship and honest, open conversation. No sexual obligation. Phone (from UK) 0365 87121 between 10.30pm and 11.30pm.

I want to meet bisexuals, TVs, people into S+M in or around Coventry. BI 13:01

Bisexual man, 24, seeks bisexual couples and bisexual women for a non-possessive, no ties sensual friendship. I'm sorry but I cannot offer a full-time monogamous relationship as I have a male lover of four years standing. Tel: RYK 249-4260 or write BI 13:02

Bisexual woman, 37, living in open heterosexual relationship, would like to meet other bisexual women in or near Leicester. BI 13:03

Anyone interested in forming bi-groups in West Midlands area please write to: Alan Taman, 14 Whyte Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B721 1ND.

A weekend for bisexual women in the Yorkshire countryside is being planned. We're hoping to share things like massage, jogging and walking as well as talking about women and bisexuality. The cost of the food and accommodation for the weekend will be on a sliding scale from about £8 - £20, depending on income.

There are facilities for children and partial access (we'll be sending out the S.A.D. access code for the house). The dates haven't been confirmed yet but will probably be in mid-April. For further information please send a S.A.E. to Ali Raven, 31 Avenue Crescent, Leeds LS8 4HD.

BI MONTHLY 2

A researcher is looking for gay and bisexual men to help in his study of the effects of discrimination, aspects of family life and the impact of sexuality on leisure activities. He particularly wishes to hear from sportsmen and artists who find their sexuality an important aspect of their sport or art. Contact Rick Osborne, Box 41, Telford, Shropshire.

Contacts

The RADICAL LESBIAN/GAY-IDENTIFIED BISEXUAL NETWORK are re-issuing their contact list. For inclusion send outline of your activities (max. 50 words) to: Pink Dandelion, 27 Graham Ave., Brighton, Sussex.

EDINBURGH BISEXUAL GROUP meets Thursdays 7.30 p.m. at Lesbian & Gay Community Centre, 58A Broughton St. Details: Kate 031-556 0497.

LONDON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP Drop-In evening every first Monday of the month at Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St., W.1. Details: Zaidie 01-249 3825.

TYNESIDE BISEXUAL GROUP meets in Newcastle. Details: Simon 0632- 615088. The group meets monthly.

SIGMA - Support for relationships where one partner is gay/bisexual. Details: Lesbian & Gay Switchboard 01-837 7324.

MEN'S ANTI-SEXIST NEWSLETTER on Alternative Roles for men. Details: MAN, 60 Rhymey St., Cathays, Cardiff.

FEMINIST LIBRARY & INFORMATION CENTRE Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London W.C.2. 01-930 0715.

BISEXUALS & MARRIED GAYS GROUP Details: Nigel 01-558 5203 (5.30 - 10 p.m.)

LONDON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP meets in people's houses. Details: Diana 01-888 9500 (before 10 p.m.)

THE LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP meets on Mondays at 8.30 p.m. at The Fallen Angel, 63 Graham St., N.1. Details: David 01-340 5729.

LESBIAN & GAY SWITCHBOARD 01-837 7324

LESBIAN LINE 01-251 6911

AIDS HELPLINE - The Terrence Higgins Trust (7-10 p.m.) 01- 833 2971

GAY LEGAL ADVICE (M-F 7-10 p.m.) 01- 821 7672

LESBIAN & GAY YOUTH MOVEMENT 01- 317 9690

U.S.A.: BOSTON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S NETWORK PO Box 1534 Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

SAN FRANCISCO BISEXUAL CENTRE 1757 Hayes St., San Francisco CA 94117.

CHICAGO BI-WAYS PO Box A333Q Chicago ILL 60690
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BISEXUAL GROUP
Amhurst MA 01002.

NETHERLANDS: BI-CLUB PO Box 797, 2003RT Haarlem.

WEST GERMANY: INITIATIVE BISEXUELLER FRAUEN & MANNER
E. Kocher, Am Niddatal 31, D-6000 Frankfurt 90.

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THIS ISSUE

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NEXT ISSUE

BISEXUAL CONFERENCE

Womens' Bisexual Group organise 4th National Conference in LONDON : Outline Program

FEEDBACK

Hi-Tech ways to influence and meet people

ABORTION

One woman's view

SURVEY

PLANNED

A massive survey of the sex lives of homosexual and bisexual men is to be carried out in Cardiff, London and Newcastle upon Tyne.

The survey has been masterminded by Professor Tony Coxon, director of social research at the University of Cardiff, and Tom MacManus of London's South Bank Polytechnic.

Professor Coxon believes that if American and European studies are to be believed there could be as many as 12 million men in Britain who have had at least one homosexual experience.

Meetings to end?

Lack of funds may force the Bisexual Women's Drop-In to cease functioning. The women meet every first Monday of the Month at the Drill Hall in London, but problems with finance mean that meeting after March are in jeopardy.

NY BIs get BB

BISEXUAL New Yorkers now have their very own information service. THE BULLETIN BOARD, a loose-leaf broadsheet, offers announcements of events, activities and informal social gatherings in the New York area. To subscribe, all you need to do is send eight stamped, self-addressed letter sized envelopes to P.O. Box 8556, NY, NY 10150. Every three or four weeks you will receive the latest news.

US conference

A third conference on bisexuality is to take place in Portland, Maine, USA on March 7-9, 1986.

The second conference attracted 250 people and the third promises to be even bigger. It is being organised by bisexual women and men from the Boston Bisexual Networks, and over fifty different workshops are planned.

LESBIAN

MAYOR

A leading campaigner for lesbian rights, Margaret Roff, will be the next Mayor of Manchester.

Ms Roff has been a member of the Labour Party for 20 years and a councillor for three years. She was deputy chairperson of the council's equal opportunities committee and a member of the lesbian sub-committee.

She will take her place at the same time as Bob Crossman, who will become the first openly gay Mayor of Islington in May.

Trivial pursuit

The Customs and Excise rules on the importation of sexually explicit material have led to the banning of a gay version of TRIVIAL PURSUIT, which was produced in the United States.

Award for Ochs

Robyn Ochs, founder member of the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, has received an award for her services to the group. The award for three years of dedicated work was presented at the world's first ever Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Conference held in Massachusetts, USA, in October last year.

New NY group

Yet another bisexual women's group has surfaced in the US. The New York City BiWomen's Network can be contacted at P.O. Box 3317, NY, NY 10185.

Hull disco

Bisexual Women in Hull are invited to attend a women-only disco on the last Saturday of every month. The event is organised by Hull LESBIAN LINE. For further details phone (0482) 2553 on Monday evenings between 7pm and 9pm or write to P.O. Box 26, Hull.

Survey generates a detailed profile

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network recently carried out a survey of its mailing list contacts. 183 women completed the questionnaire and their average age was 27, with most falling into the 24-29 age bracket. 90% have no children.

In response to the question: "What is your sexuality?" 38% said they had no preference for men or for women. 34% are mostly heterosexual; 25% are mostly homosexual; the categories exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual each attracted 1.7%.

In contrast, the question: "What is your lifestyle?" gained the following replies: 6.4% are exclusively homosexual; 27% are mostly homosexual; 23% no preference; 41% mostly

heterosexual; 1.7% exclusively heterosexual. Of the women responding, 54% are usually monogamous, and 17% are strongly monogamous, whilst only 3.4% are strongly non-monogamous and 15% usually non-monogamous. 10% are not sure.

29% of the women are in ongoing monogamous relationships; 21% with a man and 8% with a woman. 27% are in non-monogamous relationships; 18% with a man, 3% with a woman and 6% with a man and a woman. Of the 43% not in ongoing relationships, 3% didn't want to be, while 29% didn't know either way.

53% of the women had attended BBWN meetings, but only 24% are currently in a support group.

NZ hets rush to support gay rights

Heterosexuals are flocking to the cause of lesbian and gay rights in New Zealand. HUG, 'heterosexuals unafraid of gays,' is an organisation which seeks the legalisation of homosexuality in New Zealand. And the organisation's membership is skyrocketing.

Opinion polls in New Zealand have shown a

majority in favour of law reform but the right wing in the country is employing delaying tactics. Leading anti-reform campaigners have openly expressed hopes that a few more people will die of AIDS. This they feel would turn the tide of opinion back to retaining the current state of the law.

Prestel's GayLine is top of the pops

The gay community now has its own electronic news and chat service operating (inter)nationally. Called "Quickchat Gay Line", it operates as part of the Micronet service (itself part of Prestel). Users can call up news and letters on their micro-computer via a telephone link. Set up as a result

of pressure from a few gay Micronet users, it is now the most popular service within Micronet, despite a few complaints from straight users who logged on and found the contents "offensive". The Micronet managers however predict a successful future for this service.

Brian MacGowran on Irish radio

BISEXUALITY was discussed live on the radio in the Republic of Ireland recently.

Brian MacGowran, a well-known face at Politics of

Bisexuality Conferences in London and Edinburgh, was invited onto the LIVE LINE magazine programme, which is broadcast daily at 2pm on Radio Telefis Eireann

OFF PINK

SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF BISEXUALITY

For nearly a year now a group of us have been working to produce a booklet about in-depth personal experiences and feelings about bisexuality. We have collected profiles on ten people (5 men, 5 women) and numerous quotations from others under relevant topic headings.

We are now ready to print and publish our work which should amount to some 64 pages including an introduction and a section of information to offer further help and support to those who require it. The booklet is aimed not just at people who want to discover what bisexuality is, but also at those on the way who need help with identity and those who already fully identify as bisexual. The profiles are wide ranging to show the scope of bisexuality and its problems from both the heterosexual and homosexual sides. They raise a large number of important issues to be considered.

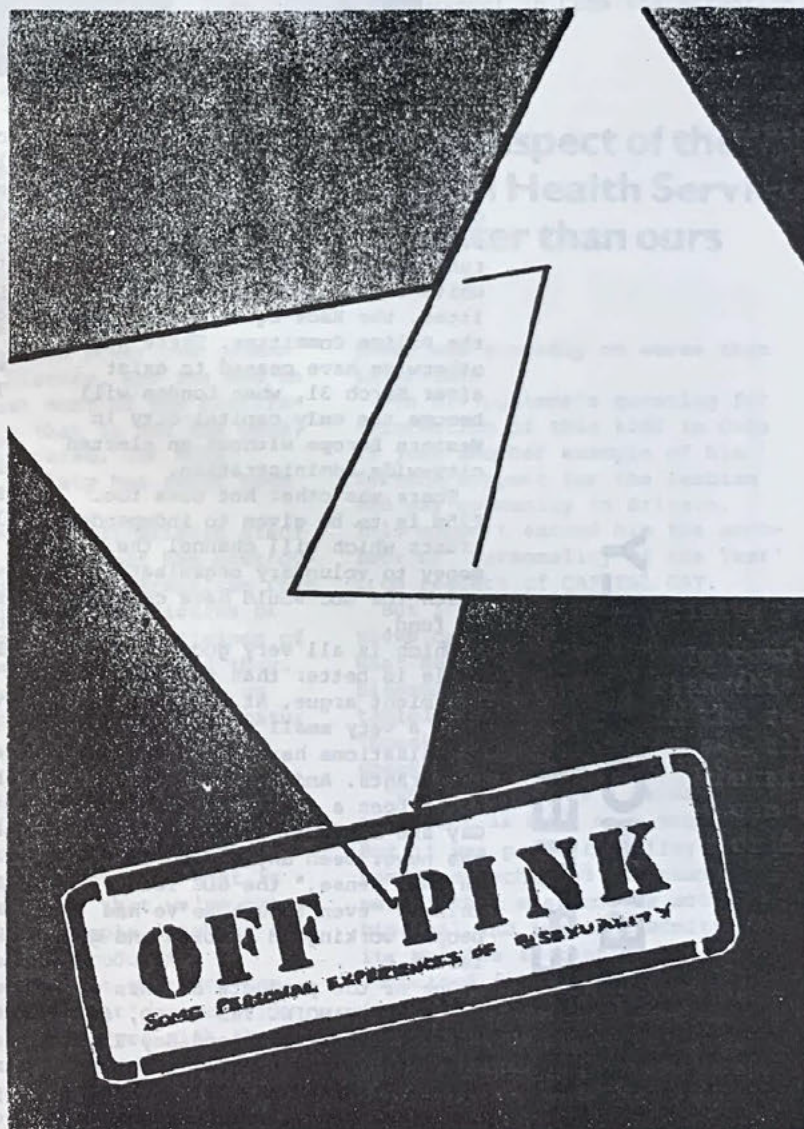
The booklet is to be professionally printed, promoted and distributed to give it as wide a circulation and appeal as possible. When there is such a minimal literature on the subject, we see this as an exciting and important opportunity to spread information, awaken discussion and further the recognition of bisexuality, and one that all bisexuals should be keen to be associated with.

To complete this project and publish this year, we have to raise in the region of £3000. We want to ask all readers of Bi Monthly to contribute to whatever extent they can towards this, whether by loan or donation.

Donations for any amount will be very welcome, loans should be for a minimum of £10 and may be required for up to 18 months. Cheques should be made out to 'Off Pink Publishing' and sent to 31 Cremorne Road, London S.W.10.

We are working on your behalf and are confident that there is a ready market for this booklet and that our aims can be achieved. Progress will be reported regularly. The manuscripts will be available for inspection if desired. Please help now. Thank you.

The Off Pink Collective



LIVINGSTONE

KEN
Text
DAVID SMITH
photos
DAVID BURKLE



THE BI-MONTHLY INTERVIEW

Ken Livingstone was in a jubilant mood when I arrived at County Hall. The Labour-controlled London Borough Councils had just been persuaded to jointly take over the running of the GLC's controversial units such as the Women's Committee, the Race Equality Unit and the Police Committee. These would otherwise have ceased to exist after March 31, when London will become the only capital city in Western Europe without an elected city-wide administration.

There was other hot news too. £25m is to be given to independent trusts which will channel the money to voluntary organisations which the GLC would have continued to fund.

Which is all very good; a GLC in exile is better than no GLC at all, one might argue. At the same time, only a very small number of gay organisations have ever received GLC grants. And why has there never been a fully-fledged Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Committee? "There has never been any demand for it in that sense," the GLC leader thinks, "even though we've had people working on lesbian and gay issues."

One of the products of this work has been CHANGING THE WORLD, a Charter for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Eighteen months ago in an interview in LESBIAN AND GAY SOCIALIST magazine, Ken Livingstone was very

critical of the failure of the lesbian and gay community to articulate a specific set of demands which local authorities could respond to. But now he sees the Charter as a 'focus to campaign around in the London Boroughs'.

He feels confident that Labour will regain control of several Tory Boroughs in the May elections. "We only need to win one or two wards to take control of Hammersmith, Brent, Ealing, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth." Is there life after death for the GLC?

But what about gay issues over which local authorities have no control - like the unacceptability of homosexuality in the Armed Forces?

"Well, I have one basic position which I apply to everything, which is that there should be no difference between laws relating to heterosexuality and laws relating to homosexuality. Given that the Armed Forces have always been such a solid bastion of homosexuality, I've never been able to understand why they've made such a big thing about it. I've met so many soldiers and sailors who've had such a happy and fulfilling life, and the proportion of actively homosexual people in the Armed Forces must be higher than in the general population. If we get another Labour government, I should think

"I have one basic position which I apply to everything: there should be no difference between laws relating to heterosexuality and laws relating to homosexuality..."

those sorts of things will be brought into line without a great deal of angst."

On the age of consent Ken Livingstone's views are much less clear cut. He is pretty certain that it can be brought down to 16 for gay male relationships - a principle that was accepted at last October's Labour Party conference. But he feels that the concept of the age of consent encompasses so many vague ideas that cannot be encapsulated in legislation.

He is aware of the tragedies that can occur. "A fifteen-year-old girl in my constituency committed suicide because she knew that she would be forced to name her lover who was seventeen. And yet that sort of age gap is normal in terms of relationships." In such a situation he stresses that the police should not be involved, and that cases should be left to

The Armed Forces have always been such a solid bastion of homosexuality.

social workers, even when twelve year olds are in relationships with 13, 14, 15 year olds. But when it comes to twelve year olds in relationships with 18, 19, 20 year olds "it's almost inevitably going to be an exploitative, relationship," he says. In this he comes close to introducing the concept of 'age difference' into the debate on the age of consent.

He rejects outright any idea that one should go down as low as twelve, as in Holland. "It's totally unacceptable," he says, "to open up twelve-year-old girls to be exploited."

He continues to be worried by any relationships where there is a large age difference. "They're usually a cover for people who are dubious about getting into relationships of equal power. I've seen so many older men exploiting their position. You need to change something in men so that they don't feel so vulnerable in their relationships with equals."



KEN ON AIDS

"As prominent people in British society have died of AIDS there has been a very effective cover-up."

"If society were less aggressive, and there was less need for hierarchies and people got less turned on by status and the positions they hold, you might actually find people getting into more fulfilling personal relationships."

"Men have used power over women throughout history. And the sad thing is that most of the civilisations where that is not the case, we have eliminated. Our more aggressive society has swept them aside."

The organised militaristic discipline of the West has destroyed the people of the Brazilian rain forests, the tribal societies of South Africa and the Aborigines of Australia and Tasmania. And they, he feels, had a lot to teach us about our relationships with nature and the survival of the planet.

His fascination for hunter-gatherer societies is evident, though he recognises it is fruitless to hark back to a situation that is gone forever, now that we've got twelve billion people 'choking on their own waste products'.

'The negative get-what-you-can attitude of the West' was sharply contrasted in his eyes with the enthusiasm he found on a recent

visit to Cuba. "Everyone is working together towards an agreed common set of goals, building society. And everyone is enthused because they are working for themselves and not for some big national corporation."

He asserts that every aspect of the Cuban Health Service is better than ours whether it be speed of treatment, number of doctors or six-monthly check-ups for cervical cancer. And the same will soon be true of their education service.

But what about the terrible treatment of gay people in Cuba and the concentration camps which used to exist until not so long ago? He says he went specifically with that question in his mind and found no denials of the mistakes that had been made. He was pleased to find three openly gay journalists working on the Party newspaper and was told that despite the lack of lesbian and gay movement in Cuba the situation

Every aspect of the Cuban Health Service is better than ours

there was probably no worse than in Britain.

Ken Livingstone's questing for information of this kind in Cuba is just another example of his fervent support for the lesbian and gay community in Britain. This support earned him the accolade of 'Personality of the Year' from readers of CAPITAL GAY.

But I wanted to know what his views on sexuality really are? What had he meant by 'we are all bisexual' - a statement that had tabloid leader writers screaming: "Speak for yourself." Had he been speaking for himself?

"What I said was a personal statement as much as a general one. But it was part of a fifty-minute rambling speech, and the meaning wasn't that everyone is actively bisexual and just not admitting it. My view is that there are no inherited factors on sexuality; it's all culturally determined. So the culture in which you grow up, your home background, what

KEN LIVINGSTONE

happens at school, all that is going to determine your sexuality. So everyone has the potential for any possible combinations of sexuality.

"I'd be surprised if anyone



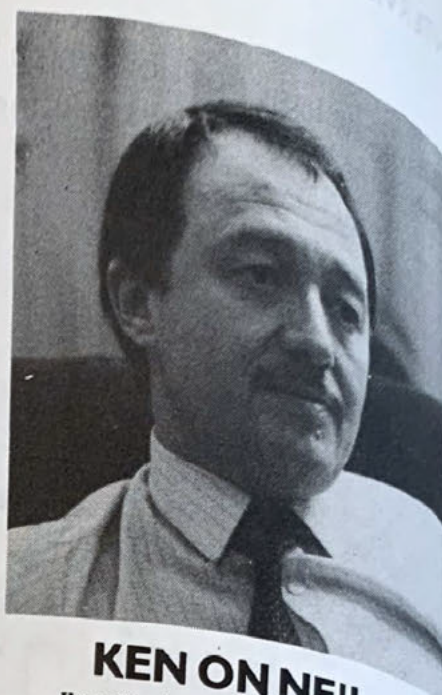
KEN ON SEX

"Sex on TV glorifies rape and that's such a damaging image. We need a much more accurate portrayal of sex. It should be part of education in schools. Unfortunately the only GLC manifesto failure we had was on no discrimination against gay teachers. The Trade Union delegates were against including that commitment."

could genuinely say that they'd got to where they were in their lives without feeling attraction for someone of the same sex - at some time. And I'd be even more surprised if there weren't a lot of people who had done something about it."

Did he think that it was important for public figures like himself to come out more than that about their bisexuality? "Public figures should raise the issues," he thought, "but I'm very dubious about them discussing their own personal relationships. In a sane society that would be no problem, but given the nature of the British media, where everything is trivialised and made disgusting and often offensive, I never talk about any of mine."

So what's in store for Ken Livingstone after the GLC is gone? He's very confident of being MP for Brent East after the next general election. And in the two years years maximum before that he wants to write a book about the GLC, have a rest and lose twenty pounds. "I've also got four hundred outstanding speaking engagements," he sighs. So he's going to be doing what he says he would advise Neil Kinnock to do, stomping around the country, talking to people, explaining policies, building support and 'moving the debate in our favour.'



KEN ON NEIL

Ken Livingstone hopes that Neil Kinnock will adopt Metropolitan ideas as espoused by the Labour GLC and was delighted by Neil's message to the Lesbian and Gay Pride march last year. "The thrust of the Labour Party campaign should be bolder. We won't win by appealing to the middle ground, because the middle ground looks for firm leadership. Opinion polls show you don't need to water down policies, you need to explain them."

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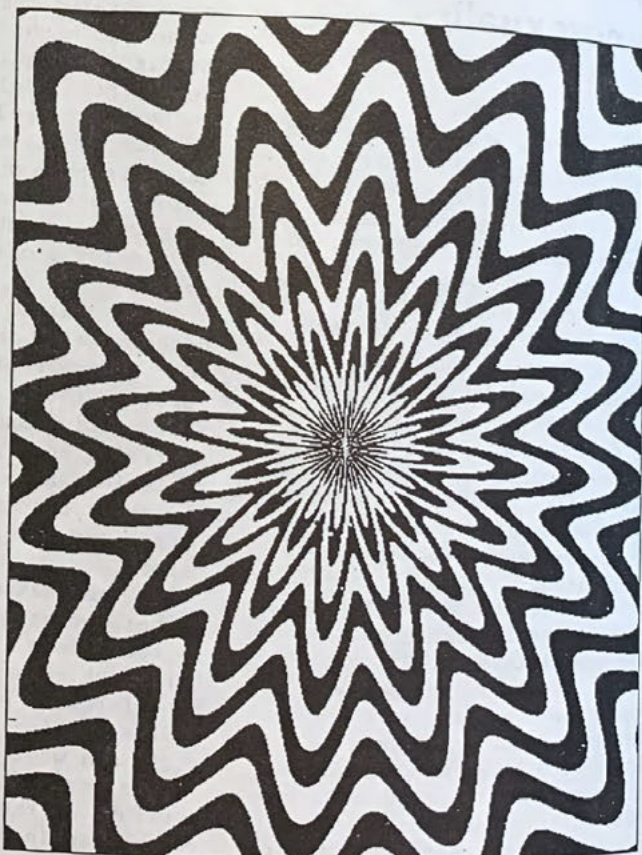
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NEIL'S SEXUALITY IS GIVING HIM PROBLEMS



BISEXUALITIES

This Book should be essential reading for anyone concerned with social psychology, counselling and the theory of sexuality.

This book should be essential reading for anyone seriously concerned with social psychology, counselling and the theory of

Fritz Klein and Timothy Wolf are among the world's leading researchers into bisexuality.

In **BISEXUALITIES: THEORY AND RESEARCH** they bring together not only their own work but that of nineteen other US social psychologists. Essays cover theories of sexual orientation, counselling bisexuals, bisexuality in marriage, Mexican men and organisations for bisexual people in New York City, San Francisco and Chicago.

sexuality.

Number eleven in the book series 'Research on Homosexuality' the publication is available from Eurospan, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU. The paperback costs £16.50 and the hardback £24.00. Ask your library to get a copy.

Below Richard Harriman begins a series of articles analysing the major developments in thinking on bisexuality presented in the essays.

THE BISEXUAL

Is bisexuality the result of internal conflict while on the road to homosexuality or is it a sexual orientation in its own right? This is the question posed by Gary Zinik in the chapter rather clumsily entitled "Identity Conflict or Adaptive Flexibility? Bisexuality Reconsidered".

Any discussion of bisexuality must be based on sound definitions. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are defined easily enough, bisexuality, because of its nature has no such readily agreed upon definition. Some writers have stressed the role of physical sexual activity, others concentrate on emotional orientation, whilst yet others cite self-definition. Zinik takes a much more global view and recognises that sexuality is multi-faceted and goes on to propose two models of bisexuality.

The first, of which we are no doubt uncomfortably aware, he christens the 'Conflict Model'. Supporters of this model would claim that people are by nature monosexual regardless of orientation. Any deviation from this binary pattern is judged to betray a deep confusion over sexual orientation. Bisexuality is considered to be a transitory phase to be passed through before settling into one's 'true' orientation.

Such a model is obviously conservative and simplistic and allows no room for variation from the norm. Unfortunately it is also the prevalent view in both the straight and gay worlds.

I would suggest that this view arises from the hostility borne towards bisexuals by monosexuals (and by some bisexuals even?) because of the contravention of rules that bisexuality entails.

The existence of bisexual people is in direct contravention of the currently held binary 'medical' model of sexuality in that it hints at an amount of choice that a person has over his or her orientation.

In opposition to this model Zinik proposes the inherently more optimistic 'Flexibility Model'. The crucial idea in this model is that heterosexuality and homosexuality are supposed to be not necessarily contradictory and conflicting. It is possible for them to be present in one person at the same time without creating psychological disturbance.

"Unlike the conflict model, which is characterised by 'either/or' thinking (one must be either heterosexual or homosexual), the flexibility model is characterised by 'both/and' thinking: one can be both heterosexual and homosexual - that is bisexual. The rationale behind the flexibility model makes it possible for homosexual and heterosexual interests to exist side-by-side without producing conflict."

Despite the topicality and relevance of Zinik's ideas, probably the most important chapter in the theoretical section of this book is that by Klein, Sepekoff and Wolf. Klein et al adapt and develop Kinsey's model of sexuality (the Kinsey Heterosexuality-Homosexuality Scale of 1948). It is well known that Kinsey proposed that human sexuality was not a simple dichotomy (straight or gay), but that it is a continuum from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality, the gulf between the two extremes being 'bisexuality'.

What Klein does is to use

Kinsey's scale as the basis of a far more complicated view of sexuality, taking into account some of the factors that Kinsey ignored. Klein assembles 21 individual Kinsey scales into one broad map of a person's sexual orientation. People completing the test rate themselves (and admittedly there are problems with this) on a Kinsey scale for seven different aspects of their sexual orientation (sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, self-identification and hetero/gay lifestyle). Each of these aspects is itself compiled three times, once for their past, once for their present and once for their 'ideal' state.

The Klein 'Grid' is not just another theoretical 'ivory tower' academic exercise, untried and untested. A copy of the grid with accompanying instructions was placed in FORUM magazine. Analysis of the results is included here and proved that the grid is a useful, valid and reliable tool (at least as far as FORUM readers were concerned).

The Klein grid does represent, in my view, an improvement on the rather archaic Kinsey scale. However it still relies very heavily on the Kinsey scale which has been the subject of criticism from various quarters. Nevertheless its contribution is to introduce two new factors into the model of sexuality. Firstly the time factor, and secondly the idea that sexual orientation does not just depend on sexual behaviour or self-definition but on a number of variables which have hitherto been ignored.

RICHARD HARRIMAN



COUNS

In almost every major town there is a telephone advice and information service for lesbians and gay men. **BI-MONTHLY** has been looking at the very limited service available to bisexuals

Over the last four and a half years **DAVID BURKLE** has borne the brunt of the telephone counselling and information work for the **LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP**. In this article he assesses his own contribution and suggests a strategy for extending the service.

Anyone actively involved in running a bisexual group will inevitably be contacted by people seeking counselling.

Many of those who telephone or come to a meeting for the first time have never told anyone about their bisexual feelings or behaviour, have never discussed their sexual and emotional longings or uncertainty and therefore have never knowingly met other bisexual or gay people. To do these things will be a great relief for them - if they are welcomed, listened to non-judgementally, encouraged to feel good about this previously hidden part of themselves and helped to work out for themselves what their options are and how they might change their lives for the better.

This in simple terms is what counselling is, and for a bisexual group to function effectively as a support group, all its members should be aware of their collective and ongoing responsibility for counselling.

At the meetings of The London Bisexual Group we have tried to meet this need by organizing a 'personal group' as an option for people to take part in rather than listening to a guest speaker. Sometimes this has not been possible due to lack of space and insufficient people willing to regularly lead such groups, but there is a consistent demand for this opportunity to talk. We have never provided face-to-face counselling as a service, though many of us have given it from time

to time as an element of conversation or as friendships develop.

Since the Group started we have always had a telephone contact available. For the three months before The London Bisexual Group's first meeting in September 1981 my phone number was used in small advertisements in *Time Out* and *Gay News* announcing the event. The calls flooded in, bringing normal life to a standstill and driving the rest of the household insane. That first meeting, for which 78 people turned up, is still the largest we have had.

The calls in that period were from a very wide cross section of people, but there was a noticeable proportion from people who equated bisexuality with a wild swinging time and instantly available sex. Often this only became apparent towards the end of a long call. Since those early days we have only publicised our telephone contact numbers in gay publications, on leaflets we send to people who write to us and with other counselling organisations and switchboards who can refer people to us. When a woman's number was publicised even in this limited way, she would receive nuisance calls from men pursuing the myths that bisexual women are the sexiest and 'wow - just think how much better for me two women at once would be.' So now the women's contact numbers are given to women only.

The average number of calls I receive is about twenty a week.

Of these about 25% are just seeking information about the Group or where to meet bisexual people at times other than Monday evenings - and 75% are to some extent counselling calls, people who want to talk about their own situations. Calls from women make up approximately a quarter of the total and over half are from men living with or married to women who have not been told about their partner's sexuality. Some of these men have been involved in sexual activity and relationships with other men for several years, others, often quite late in life, become increasingly aware of their desire to do so, particularly the desire to be the passive partner, made love to by another man. A high proportion of them express continuing love for their wives, not as 'cover', but as people who 'wouldn't understand' or 'would be devastated'. The remaining calls are from couples seeking other couples, gay men wanting to be less exclusively gay, transvestites, and bisexual men specifically wanting to meet bisexual women.

There are several disadvantages in operating a telephone counselling service from home and it may come as a surprise to some people that it is done at all. Many support groups have started in this way.

The advantages are that it costs very little other than your own time and that someone can be available almost continually within predetermined limits. The

ELLING

wider these limits of course, the greater the likelihood that some calls will come at highly inconvenient moments. Your caller may have taken weeks or years to pluck up courage to phone and gone to extensive lengths to set up a situation where time and privacy are available, and you as a counsellor have to deal with it effectively whether you have five minutes to spare before washing your hair or the fifty minutes that it may need. Your callers must not be aware of your irritation that you are going to be late for your lover yet again or they are unlikely to take up your suggestion to call you later.

There could be an intermediate arrangement between our present one of two or three people operating a helpline whenever they happen to be at home and setting

up a fully independent bisexual switchboard. This arrangement would consist of a larger group of people each making a regular commitment to do the job at specific times. Callers would then be referred from a central number to the person on duty at that time.

To operate a counselling service reasonably well from home you need to believe sufficiently in the importance of it to have no objection to being continuously interrupted in what you are doing. You also need to be interested in people, and, to be a good listener, able to switch off your own thoughts and concerns so that you can give callers your undivided attention. You need to be well informed to be able to refer people on to other agencies and to know where to find out what is

available socially in their own district. You need to be patient, broad minded and not easily shockable. Even the most bizarre calls must be assumed to be genuine and torrents of abuse should leave you completely unruffled. You also need to be able to respect the confidentiality of what you learn about people in a counselling situation.

The techniques of counselling are different from the normal interchange that takes place in conversation and they have to be learnt. I was surprised to hear recently that Gay Switchboard volunteers' training does not give much attention specifically to counselling, and that the service is primarily seen as one of information and referral, with counselling skills, which many of

... and CLARE THOMSON talks of her experiences of the increasingly popular Co-counselling

In the context of these articles about counselling I thought that it would be useful to write from the experience of being a recipient.

I've been called a 'happy, together bisexual' and often I am exactly that. I know this is linked to having been counselled well - not the only ingredient in a possible recipe but a good one.

I've become very good at building relationships and 'falling in love'.

By falling in love I don't mean the gushy sentimental stuff in romance novels or the once-in-a-lifetime notion so popular on TV. I mean the way sometimes I'm captivated and struck by goodness and beauty and see someone as truly wonderful. From this viewpoint I realise and develop a deep sense of caring for them.

As well as being dead exciting, falling in love seems to be full of scary pitfalls. Here are some of mine. See if you recognise any:

Suppose she doesn't feel the same!

How do I tell him?

What do I do next?

Am I good enough?

My appetite's gone - what's happening to me?

If I get involved, I'll just get hurt!

I'm fine as I am, it's not worth the trouble....

Talking to a good counsellor about

relationships is useful at this point. They listen really well and have skills to encourage me to express my feelings. Sometimes I tremble as I talk and after a while that scary feeling finishes. Suddenly I can think clearly again and work out what I want to do.

Almost everyone has experienced the satisfaction of talking to a good friend about what is important to one or close to one's heart. Being counselled is a development of this.

When I need to think about something uninterrupted I find counsellors who have learnt not to chip in with any of their own opinions on the subject very valuable. Just the opposite to getting 'advice' in fact.

Although a chat with a friend might lead deliciously off into an interesting discussion it's not the same as getting a chance to work things out for myself.

All sorts of people have counselled me very well - not just other bisexuals or other women.

Now that I'm surrounded by loving relationships and I'm living a bisexual lifestyle I find that my growing confidence seems to empower me to communicate more and more effectively on a larger scale. I am definitely much more active in tackling oppressions, nuclear arms issues and preserving the world.

There seems to be growing need

to set up a proper counselling service for people specifically to talk about bisexuality. I am excited by the idea and would like to take part. I think we would need at least ten people to start with, all of whom would need some experience of counselling.

One way to learn these skills is to enrol in a 'fundamentals of co-counselling' class which is where I learnt. Co-counselling is a process whereby people of all ages and all backgrounds can learn to exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from past distress experiences.

In co-counselling each person takes a turn at being the counsellor and the one being listened to. So you learn to be a good counsellor and you get counselled yourself.

Fundamentals classes usually involve 21-40 hours in total. Your local adult education institute might run them. If not, there are two worldwide networks running classes. I highly recommend either. The fees vary between £13 and £20 total. Often these are on a sliding scale to match your income and like the classes payment is spread over several weeks.

For further information contact: Louise tel. 01-853 3161 or David tel. 01-340 5729 Both will be happy to tell you about classes and the networks.

COUNSELLING

Nigel Cooper of the Bisexuals and Married Gays Support Group interrupts his busy schedule to launch a broadside at Anna Raeburn

Another iced over puddle zoomed past and my digital speedometer topped 20 mph. Cycling amongst the London rush hour may not be the best setting to consider the counselling needs of bisexuals not presently being met-- but it was all I had (this was to be a rush job).

As far as I could tell, the most neglected area was bisexual women; this was the opinion of other, much larger gay groups as well. Present groups for lesbians have almost exclusively sprung out of the political end of the feminist movement. It's my impression that

The most neglected area is bisexual women

such groups are not particularly sympathetic towards women with a present sexual relationship with a man and even less sympathetic if they are a) married and/or b) have strong religious convictions.

I have been trying for 9 months to find a married bisexual woman capable of non-directive counselling and have so far failed. I'm trying to do this to complete the remit of the Bisexuals' and Married Gays Support Group which, at least on paper, should cater for women too.

The issue got broader the more I thought about it and began to knit together around the standard of counselling available in support groups generally. It's not disputed that there is difficulty get-

ing people to sit on a Helpline but it's a complete mistake to let anyone who is keen to do so loose on people who may be trying to resolve a crisis (or crises) in their lives. Gratuitous advice and personal opinions are two failings that I've found myself coping with the results of.

I had the great fortune to be trained by the Samaritans and so I nearly fell through the floor when Anna Raeburn announced one Wednesday evening that "bisexuals who are happy with their lifestyle are few and far between." The programme went on to endorse the popular myth that a crisis in a sexual relationship will cause a bisexual to revert to the facet of their sexuality not currently in use (usually the gay side). That this sort of thing could be announced by an experienced agony aunt on London's Capital Radio spoke volumes.

The root of this particular "evil" in counselling appears to be the existence of social stereotypes whether they be political, religious, gender-based, or based on sexuality. Even the ubiquitous Gay Switchboard has astonished some of my callers with the preconceived ideas of the person taking the call and the gratuitous 'life history' of the helpline to which the unwitting caller has listened.

I consider I have done my 'job' properly if I have done substantially less talking than my caller

and had to gently correct the impression that I had advised them by pointing out that the advice had not been anything I had said but their fresh insight into their 'problems' developed over the course of the phone call or one-to-one chat.

Amongst the callers I get there seems to be a need for a social outfit that recognizes the impossibility of telling your spouse of your intention to do something about giving the gay facet of your sexuality some expression without it sending the relationship and them down the tubes. There seems

"I consider that I've done my job properly if I've done substantially less talking than my caller."

to be a real need to keep it all secret and yet provide some kind of forum for getting together socially.

Finally, it is worth running over what I've been doing so far: a helpline on weekdays, one-to-one counselling sessions face-to-face on a sort of supply and demand basis, and group counselling meetings every two to three weeks. It's never dull and I feel it is important to treat each person without any preconceptions. This year I hope to find support in getting the women's side of things moving.

DIANA SUGGATE of the London Bisexual Women's group talks about the women who phone her and how she copes.

I was receiving three or four telephone calls a week from bisexual women when I started to volunteer as a 'contact' for the London Bisexual Women's Group. Often women who ring are feeling isolated and confused. It may be the first time they have talked about their bisexuality. Other women fear that family or straight friends will reject them if their bisexuality is known. Some fear being shunned by friends who are exclusively lesbian, others are ashamed of their lesbian feelings. Or they are happy, secure, wonderful women from the London Bisexual Women's Group who just want to know when the next meeting is. Joining the LBWG is not actually a passport to eternal happiness - but it does help.

I believe that having the support of other bisexuals is

essential in order for us to develop confidence about our sexual and emotional orientation. Especially when the rest of society seems only to recognise the labels 'heterosexual', 'lesbian' or 'gay'. So when women ring me I try to project a positive view of bisexuality and to encourage them to come to the women's group drop-in at the Drill Hall or to come to the mixed group at The Fallen Angel.

When I used to work for a telephone counselling service called 'Youthline' in New Zealand I reckoned I had heard it all by the end of my stint there. Now I am a member of the co-counselling community, wherein we take turns at being client and counsellor, and the aim is to explore emotions that would otherwise be repressed. It's great! I get to beat up a

lot of cushions.

Hopefully these involvements have given me some clues about counselling. Foremost, I give a caller my 'free attention', ie I listen to what they are saying without straying off into my own thoughts. I try to empathise, be non-judgemental and to encourage callers to express their feelings. Importantly I try not to allow their distress to prey on my mind after I hang up. Of course there are other elements in counselling. I do not claim to have perfected them all. But I do my best.

Through the bisexual community I have gained the confidence to reject the myths and negative attitudes towards bisexuality, and I hope that as contact for the LBWG I have been able to help other bisexual women to get the support they need too.

POETRY



Michael the hero is dying in Africa,
Hugo the spy is measuring the hill,
And the madman Smith is watching the clubhouse,
Looking for someone to kill...
The nurse reads a thriller under the lilacs,
The gardener is clipping away with his shears,
And the chambermaid stands in the big white doorway;
Her eyes are blinded with tears.
The air man soars through the night of the soul,
The scholar sits crouched on the graves of Peru,
The watchman snores. But the rest lie wondering,
Wondering what to do...
O the birds of disorder are crossing the Continent,
No one knows whither and no one knows why,
And softly, softly, the ones I love
Are getting ready to die.

Frederick Prokosch



At midnight, when suddenly you hear
an invisible procession passing
with exquisite music, with voices calling,
don't mourn your Fortune that's deserting you,
your work that has failed, your plans
that have all turned out to be illusions -
don't mourn them uselessly:
as if long prepared for this, and bravely,
bid her farewell, the Alexandria that is leaving.
Above all, don't make this mistake, don't say
it was a dream, that your ears deceived you;
don't stoop to empty hopes like those.
As if long prepared, and bravely
as becomes you, who are worthy of such a city,
with emotion but not with regret
or a coward's whining, listen to the voices,
to the exquisite music of that mysterious procession
and bid her farewell, the Alexandria you are losing.

Constantine Cavafy

COUNSELLING

Continued

their volunteers undoubtedly do have, being acquired elsewhere or inadvertently along the way.

All people who regularly do counselling work are advised to have an easily available arrangement where they can be the 'client'. This can be done in some kind of support group consisting of people involved in similar work or by using co-counselling.

There are several networks of people teaching co-counselling throughout the UK and internationally. There are also counselling courses available at many institutions, polytechnics and colleges. Those of us involved in this aspect of the work of the bisexual groups in London will be pleased to pass on the information we have about these networks and courses to

anyone interested

Local gay switchboards and Friend counselling and befriending groups will usually be quite willing to allow bisexuals to participate in their training sessions. The latter may well be able to assist with rooms for meetings and photocopying or office facilities for setting up new bisexual groups. Their literature specifically offers their services to bisexuals as well as lesbians and gays and we should make sure we take advantage of this and keep in touch with such groups locally. You may even discover other bisexuals working within such organisations. If so, let us know - bisexuals prefer to be counselled by bisexuals, as most other disadvantaged or oppressed groups gain most strength from counselling with people who have direct experience

From time to time we receive written requests for advice about problems. These are answered personally, though this is time-consuming, and since we depend on volunteers we are not always able to do it as quickly as we would wish. At present there is not a steady enough flow to warrant making regular arrangements to deal with these letters, but this may soon prove necessary as we become more established and receive more publicity.

This article has looked at what LBG is doing at present and shows up several areas where improvements could be made. Some research is also needed on how bisexuals are dealt with by other counselling agencies and whether there are 'out' bisexuals working within those agencies. 'Don't just sit there....'

Papal pomp and antique grandeur

Marguerite Yourcenar, the French lesbian writer, who in 1929 wrote one of the first positive gay novels, is relatively little known in this country. Though Riat Mae Brown suggested that Yourcenar should have received the Nobel Prize for Literature, her works do not often even figure among the 'greats' of French literature taught in universities in Britain.

Yet she ranks alongside Sartre and de Beauvoir on school syllabuses in France, where young people warm to such novels as *ALEXIS* and *MEMOIRS OF HADRIAN*.

A young musician from the dilapidated Czech aristocracy, Alexis writes letters to his wife analysing his life and his homosexuality. *MEMOIRS OF HADRIAN* is a multi-faceted biography of the Roman emperor, with the odd orgy thrown in.

Yourcenar was the first woman to be elected to the Académie Française, that inner sanctum of French language policy making. She taught literature for many years in New York, and *THE DARK BRAIN OF PIRANESI*, a collection of essays, is the cream of over half a century of study.

The inspiration for the hell of Newgate Prison, portrayed in so many Victorian novels, came from the drawings of Giovanni Batista Piranesi. The greatest "coffee-table" artist of the 18th century, he sublimated his desire to be an architect and in his fantastic etchings he rebuilt the ruins of Ancient Rome in the Baroque fashion of the day.

He deliberately readjusted perspectives and played with equilibrium, creating an analysis of mass, 'a conquest as considerable as the Impressionists' analysis of light'. Peopling his prints with hunchbacks, cripples and beggars he pointed out the grotesque contrast between papal pomp and antique grandeur on the one hand, and on the other the miseries and absurdities of contemporary Roman life.

With consummate erudition Ms Yourcenar savours every aspect of

Nocturnal guilt and furtiveness

ALEXIS by M. Yourcenar (Black Swan, 93pp, £2.50)

This - Yourcenar's first novel, published at the age of 26 and recently reissued in soft cover - is the farewell letter of a musician to his young wife, in which just after the birth of their son, he reveals his feelings of attraction to his own sex and in which he tries to explain why he must leave her and follow his own

the work of Piranesi, floating extravagant ideas and illuminating the artist's links with Goethe, de Sade and Byron, to name but a few historical, literary and artistic references which stud her writing.

'The Dark Brain of Piranesi' is just one of seven essays ranging from the mediocrity of the late Caesars to humanism and occultism in the books of Thomas Mann. There are some illuminating reflections on French history and universal concerns in a critique of the epic poetry of the Huguenot, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and in a cameo study of the chateau of Chenonceaux. Ms Yourcenar analyses the work of Selma Lagerlöf, the Swedish novelist, who ranks, in her view, among women of genius.

Finally we are given a critical introduction to Constantine Cavafy, one of the most famous poets of modern Greece. Cavafy lived most of his life savouring the history, mythology, and politics of the city where he died in 1933. Whilst working for 30 years in the Ministry of Irrigation, wavering between pleasure and asceticism, he concentrated on creating 'the serene precision and enduring beauty of the poem.' Many of the 28 poems quoted in the essay testify to Cavafy's gay sensibility. The concept of sin is alien to his work, claims Ms Yourcenar, and 'without much concern for being approved or not, the old Greek returns to the hedonism of Antiquity...to a kind of pure and simple assertion of all sensual freedom':

"No one could have seen us. But already

Passion had robbed us of all precautions

Our clothes were unbuttoned

- we weren't wearing much, it was scorching hot that divine July."

If you are interested in history, art and the world and you like prose to be arcanelly informative but dealing with great universal issues, then *THE DARK BRAIN OF PIRANESI* is a treat.

DAVID SMITH

homosexual liberties. For this description of a married homosexual man of this particular culture, now extinct, the author chose a spare, precise and 'decanted' language. This conveys feelings of guilt, temptations and furtiveness, and the poisoning of the soul as Alexis recounts his nocturnal and unfulfilling encounters.

ANDREAS REDA

BOOKS IN BRIEF PERFECT FRIEND

KATHERINE MANSFIELD, *THE MEMORIES OF LM* is the account of twenty years of intimacy between the New Zealand writer and her 'perfect friend', LM (Ida Constance Baker). The book comprises Ida's memoirs interspersed with Katherine's letters and poems, and it traces the latter's stormy, passionate and searching life.

LEGUIN TO MUSIC

A new novel by Ursula LeGuin is published in March. *ALWAYS COMING HOME* (from Gollancz) is accompanied by an optional extra, a cassette of mood music to be played while reading the book.

SEX CARTOONS

Posy Simmonds whose Guardian cartoon strips have made her very popular has illustrated *A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE SEX MANUAL*. The text of the book is by Alan Rusbridger and it is published by Faber in April.

THE INTIMATE KINSEY

Yale University Press has just published an intimate biography of the pioneer sex-researcher Alfred Kinsey.

IT IS BACK

The first full moon of 1986 marked the howling rebirth of the 'sixties' independent, non-aligned access paper - *International Times*.

IT will cover national and international issues from sexual politics to class war, the Sandinistas to Saatchi and Saatchi. "We want to confront traditional values and challenge established viewpoints," says Chris Brook, new joint editor.

The sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll format of the late 60s and early 70s has changed: "This is not a hippy revival," Brook hastens to add.

IT is destined to fill the yawning gap in the British press for a truly independent newspaper. Every full moon IT will appear in newsagents, alternative bookshops, healthfood shops and other likely hot-beds of independent thought. The message is: "Hassle your news-agent! And get him/her to stock IT." Cover price is 70p.

For further info write to: *International Times*, 25 Denmark Street, London WC2.

Tel: 01- 246 6024

ALISON HIGGINS

VIDAL'S LINCOLN

Gore Vidal's fictionalised biography of Abraham Lincoln has just been published in paperback.

READING MATTERS BOOKS IN BRIEF ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

To coincide with the forthcoming film **ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS**, Allison Busby have published an omnibus edition of Colin MacInnes' three London novels of the 50s. **ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS** deals with teenage life in the capital and centres on the Notting Hill riots of 1958. **CITY OF SPADES** shows the fascination of a white welfare officer for the burgeoning black sub-culture. And **MR LOVE AND JUSTICE** is a mocking parody dealing with prostitution and the Vice Squad. **THE COLIN MACINNES OMNIBUS** costs £6.95 and is already a best-seller at Gay's the Word bookshop.

BLACK FOLKLORIST

One of Alice Walker's heroines has had two of her books republished by Virago Press. Zora Neal Hurston was a journalist, critic and folklorist of black culture in the US in the early part of this century. Her autobiography is **DUST TRACKS ON THE ROAD** (£4.50) and **THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD** (£3.50) is a novel.

SCIENCE HERSTORY

Margaret Alic's **HYPATIA'S HERITAGE** is a herstory of women in science from antiquity to the late 19th century. Hypatia of Alexandria was a neoplatonist astronomer murdered by a mob in AD415. The book is by Women's Press and costs £4.95.

LITERARY FEMINISM

Something to look forward to for the summer is **FEMINISM AND LITERATURE** by Michele Roberts, author of the highly successful **THE WILD GIRL**, the gospel according to Mary Magdalene. The new book will comprise Ms Roberts' own personal reflections on writing.

FRENCH WOMEN

Claire Duchen's **FEMINISM IN FRANCE** (RKP £5.95) is the first study of the evolution of the women's movement in France from the heady days of 1968 onwards.

CHANGING LOVE

Polity Press is publishing a series of translations of foreign works in the social sciences/humanities field. Two very interesting inclusions are: **LOVE AS PASSION** (£19.50) by Niklas Luhmann, a study of changing notions of love from the Middle Ages to the present day; and **CRITIQUE OF COMMODITY AESTHETICS** (£15) by W.F. HAUG. According to Stuart Hall, the latter is a classic study of the ways in which advertising moulds human sensuality.

Poetry of freedom and equality

TOWARDS DEMOCRACY by Edward Carpenter, GMP, 415pp, £5.95 p-b.

'At the turn of the century Edward Carpenter was a prophetic figure in the twin movements of socialism and sexual freedom. His writings championed women's liberation and animal rights, and he openly celebrated homogenic love.'

In 1886 he helped to set up the Sheffield Socialist Society bringing many leading anarchists and socialists to speak in the town. But he lived in the country where he found his inspiration in the beauty and individuality of every element of nature.

He abhorred 'civilisation', especially in its Victorian guise of the cult of private property, which he saw creating poverty, drawing people away from nature, turning women into property and building up the state whose sole purpose was to ensure that the property remained in the hands of the few.

He often shocked the Fabians of his time and he is certainly a long way from the Labour Party of today. But his works had many roots other than Marx and Engels. After studying at Cambridge he became a priest and obviously had affinities with the Aesthetic movement, which saw in the beauty of nature and of church ritual an antidote to the ugliness of industrial slums. He had been exalted and inspired by the Bhagavad Gita, the central work of Hindu philosophy, and he had been profoundly affected by **LEAVES OF GRASS**, by the contemporary poet Walt Whitman, who was also homo-

sexual. Carpenter began **TOWARDS DEMOCRACY** after a visit to Whitman in the States. He compared the great man to Christ and was particularly impressed by his unrestrained relationships with ordinary people. From this inspiration he drew his philosophy of comradeship as a counter to materialism, exploitation and oppression.

Carpenter saw bisexuality as the norm of a new society in which those who had recognised their own androgyny would be ambassadors between men and women, inspiring new cultural and humanitarian activities unrelated to the traditional division of labour.

The 200 or so free-flowing poetic works which make up **TOWARDS DEMOCRACY** range over the experiences and concerns of Carpenter's life. He described the poems as 'the start-point and kernel of all my later work, the centre from which the other books have radiated.'

Stylistically he was making a definite break with classical tradition. He was known as Engand's Whitman but certainly lacked the studied originality of Gerard Manley Hopkins who died unknown and unpublished in 1889 when Carpenter was enjoying his greatest success.

TOWARDS DEMOCRACY is by turns illuminating, predictable and utterly inspiring. Freedom and equality, the twin themes of the book, will always need elegant protagonists. Carpenter is certainly one of them.

DAVID SMITH

The dark side of the Virgin Mary

THE CULT OF THE BLACK VIRGIN by Ean Begg, Arkana, 289pp, £5.95.

There are hundreds of black statues supposedly of the Virgin Mary dotted throughout Europe. Ean Begg catalogues them and with admirable succinct scholarship he dips into the intertwining elements of the history of the phenomena. He ranges from the archetypal Lilith, through the gods and goddesses of Ancient Egypt, to Charlemagne. And he introduces elements of thought from St Bernard of Clairvaux, and from Sufism, as well as the idea of the feminine principle in all humans, the anima.

Begg points out the links between the liquidation of the Knights Templar, the persecution of the gnostic Cathars, the ex-

cesses of the Inquisition and the burning of witches.

In many cases what was being suppressed was an independence of thought, directly opposed to the monolithic powers of the Roman church, along with a more co-operative way of living, acceptance of homosexuality and forces for the emancipation of women.

The image of the black virgin is very much linked with women who possessed knowledge about abortion, contraception, childbirth and healing.

Ean Begg's book is fascinating and an excellent companion to Marina Warner's highly acclaimed **ALONE OF ALL HER SEX**, The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary.

DAVID SMITH

BOOKS IN BRIEF

MALE IMPERSONATOR

Vesta Tilley, music-hall star and male impersonator, is the subject of a new biography by Sara Maitland. And Judith Oakley has written about Simone de Beauvoir, author of *THE SECOND SEX* and lifelong companion of Jean-Paul Sartre. Both books are published by Virago in April.

THEATRE AND BEAUTY

CARRY ON UNDERSTUDIES is a history of ten years of gay theatre by Michelene Wandor. And *FACE VALUE: The Politics of Beauty* is a study of enormous social advantages attractive men and women enjoy. It is written by Robin Tolmach Lakoff and Raquel L. Scherr. Both books are published by RKP in May.

POVERTY AND RACISM

The success of Alice Walker's prizewinning bisexual and recently filmed novel *THE COLOUR PURPLE* has led to the UK publication of her first book, *THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND*.

Set in Georgia during the 1920's it tells of a family trying to make a living for themselves by working for white men on their plantations. Living in squalid, dilapidated huts, their hopes are crushed and the newly married, proud, handsome men turn into drunken, disillusioned and despairing wife-beaters. Grange Copeland is driven by poverty and racism to leave his wife and son and go North, where he hopes to find a better life. Years later he returns - dissatisfied.

It is a compelling, emotive and in places horrific story that makes you wince with pain.

Alice Walker is a remarkable writer.

Kate Burkle

VIRGINIA WOOLF

WOMAN OF LETTERS by Phyllis Rose (RKP £4.95) is a life of Virginia Woolf written as Woolf herself might have perceived it from a feminist point of view.

FOUCAULT ON SEXUALITY

June sees the long-awaited publication of Volume Two of *THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY* by the renowned French philosopher Michel Foucault, who died last year.

Militarisation of Science

STAR WARS by E.P. Thompson (Penguin Special, 165pp, £2.95)

While we're waiting for the connections between SDI and the Westland affair to be more widely discussed, here's your chance to get the background.

Thompson begins with the Presidential election campaign where Reagan took his cues from right wing think tanks and powerful interest groups such as defence contractors and the electronics industry. There was collusion with friendly governments in Bonn and London, showing disregard for those principles of democratic accountability these weapons are supposed to defend. The arguments for SDI are conflicting, contradictory and mutually exclusive.

Adult Fairy Tales

BLACK VENUS by Angela Carter, Chatto and Windus, 121pp, £8.95.

In this her latest collection of short stories Angela Carter has built on ideas taken from history, folklore and literature: Poe's sad life; Baudelaire's mistress; the murderess, Lizzie Borden; as well as the characters from *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. Each story is twisted so the reader never knows what to expect, even if familiar with the original tale or event.

Ms Carter's stories are always fantastic, filled with characters who change gender, even species, as here in *PETER AND THE WOLF*.

In only three pages *THE KISS* paints a picture of how a couple's life is changed after the wife is tricked into kissing an architect who is more than he seems. Ms Carter has described her writing as Borgesian, after the Argentin-

One wonders whether it is really far-fetched to argue that US multi-nationals are trying to bring Western Europe under their technological control and regaining the high-tech leadership by not investing enough in non-military research. One in eight US researchers is already paid by the military, and a further militarisation of science, with its inevitable security constraints on academic and scientific life seems likely.

The unstoppable momentum of the arms race continues with the possibility that lasers could be used to create Dresden-like fire storms, which in themselves could bring about nuclear winter.

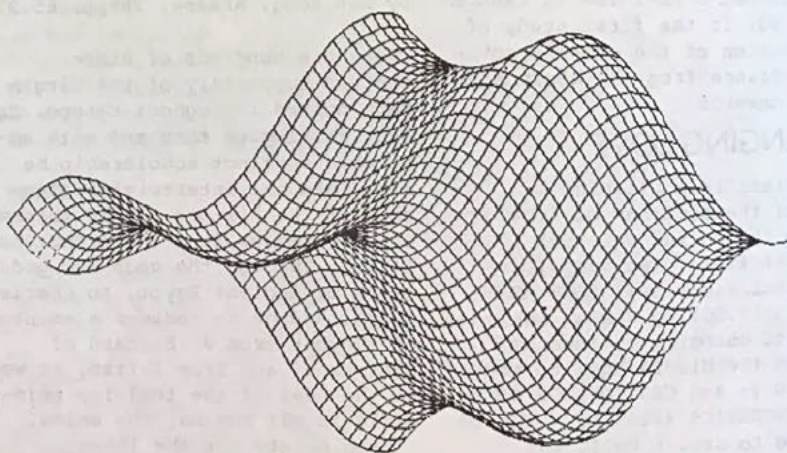
ian born, English educated scholar, Jorge Borges; and *THE KISS* is as complete and complex as any Borges story.

The language of Angela Carter's stories reads like poetry. She writes for the ear rather than the printed page and for herself rather than an audience. She has said she enjoys reading finished works aloud and loves having someone read to her.

"I have a feeling for narrative. (but) I have difficulty with beginning, middle and ends; I get them all mixed up," she has said. Nevertheless Angela Carter is London's most exciting storyteller. Her fiction reads like adult fairy tales.

Watch out for her televised adaptation of her novel *THE MAGIC TOYSHOP*, set in London.

ELLEN WEISSBUCH



R H

Viewing Kiss of the Spiderwoman

Are you looking for a bisexual role model? Manuel Puig has created one in his novel *KISS OF THE SPIDERWOMAN*.

Valentin Arregui Paz is a political activist who has dedicated his life to fighting social injustice in his native country. With discernment and courage he challenges social pressures that restrict freedom of choice. His destiny is to be tortured to death by prison authorities.

During his imprisonment he is confronted with his bisexual potential. At first Valentin keeps an emotional from Luis Molina, his female-identified homosexual cell mate. When prison officials poison his food in an attempt to soften him up, Valentin nevertheless accepts the care that Luis offers him.

Luis bathes him, feeds him, washes his soiled clothes. Vulnerable and exhausted Valentin takes his benefactor into his confidence telling him about the woman he loves and yearns for. Luis falls in love. Valentin listens to his confession of love with thoughtful respect. Valentin is touched by Luis' affection for him. Eventually he accepts the invitation to fuck Luis.

The change in feelings and attitudes that Valentin goes through in the course of the novel illuminates the meaning of bisexuality. How disappointing that the popular and in many ways excellent film version sidesteps this issue of bisexual consciousness.

In the film a doubt hangs in the air. Is Valentin after all scheming to exploit Luis' attraction to him, hoping to use sexual intimacy as a means of inducing Luis to

carry a message to Valentin's colleagues when he is paroled?

This enigma is concretized in a brilliant image - a breathtaking kiss bestowed on Luis by Valentin before they separate. The kiss is sustained and passionate. Interfused with the desire to win Luis' consent to deliver the message, it bestows courage and strength. At the same time it appears to be utterly unconditional, utterly accepting of Luis as a person. These dark ambiguities in Valentin's relationship with Luis leave us wondering if Valentin knows whether or not he is compromising his principles.

In the novel these ambiguities do not exist. Valentin consciously does not allow himself to exploit his friend even to advance his political cause. Just as he opposes the social and political structures by which one group exploits another, he is on guard against such tendencies in himself.

Self-awareness is one of Valentin's great achievements. He quickly catches himself when he acts in a stereotypical masculine manner towards his benefactor. This occurs as he recovers from the poisoning. He becomes impatient with the way Luis continues to hiver over him telling him what to eat and when to rest. He loses his temper one day and attacks Luis' symbols of domesticity, throwing food around and knocking over the kerosene stove Luis cooks on.

Afterwards he is ashamed. Reflecting on his conduct he realises that he has been governed by a model of masculinity that is contrary to the ideals he has risked his life for. The respect that

ence on February 14th. The audience felt that on balance it was better for it not to be shown. An inordinate stress was put on cottaging, sadomasochism, fist-fucking and activities involving shit and urine. And there were several incorrect statements about AIDS and unverifiable generalisations about gay and bisexual men.

Musical Cage aux Folles

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, in the Broadway musical version, is to open in London at the Palladium in May. The show will star Dennis Quilley.

Human Suffering of AIDS

ITV is to screen a two-hour US television film about a man who has AIDS. The film *AN EARLY FROST* was first broadcast by NBC. It dramatises the human suffering, grief and anguish behind the sensational media headlines. The story concentrates on a family in

each human being owes to every other human being is what his political mission is all about. His understanding of masculinity must fit this fundamental rule (and of course femininity would have to be redefined in the same terms). "what really makes a man," he says, "has to do with not humiliating someone else...not letting the person next to you feel degraded."

In order to be masculine in this sense he must make an honest appraisal of his feelings for Luis. There in the closed world of the prison cell he takes the necessary step of freeing himself sexual stereotypes and conventional male role models. He acknowledges his bisexual potential. With tremendous consistency he examines his homoerotic feelings on their merit and sets out to invent new models of behaviour for himself.

Valentin encourages Luis to enter into this bisexual consciousness with him and to shape a relationship without exploitation or degradation. For Molina that means he will not think less of himself because he takes the role of a woman. Valentin tells Luis, "Look...if it weren't for the fact that it must hurt a hell of a lot, I'd tell you to do it to me to demonstrate that this business of being a man, it doesn't give any special rights to anyone."

Valentin is a role model for the new Age of Aquarius, integrating his bisexual potential with resilience, confidence and concern for the beloved other. Let us be aware that he is reformulating for us an ancient, familiar and challenging precept of love.

WILLIAM HIMELHOCH

small-town America shattered by the discovery that a son is dying from an AIDS-related disease.

Martin Sheen in AIDS play

Martin Sheen, star of *APOCALYPSE NOW*, is to appear in a play about AIDS in NEW YORK. *THE NORMAL HEART* by Larry Kramer has caused great controversy, anger and agitation in the U.S.. It opens at the Royal Court, London on 20 March and runs for just six weeks. Book early!

Yorkshire TV on bisexuality

Yorkshire Television has been searching for a bisexual woman to appear in a programme they are making. The producers were particularly interested in interviewing a woman who was married and only later came to the decision that she was bisexual. Yorkshire TV has previously made programmes about the lives of married gay men.

Angela Carter for TV

Angela Carter's novel *THE MAGIC TOYSHOP* is to be made into a TV film. Ms Carter whose stories inspired the film *COMPANY OF WOLVES* is to write the screenplay for the new film from her own book.

View of Censorship

A BBC HORIZON programme about men and gay sex has been shelved. The film, directed by Fisher Dilke, was made in the light of AIDS and the press has expressed fears that the real facts about the disease and those most at risk were being censored from the public eye. These fears were alleviated somewhat when the film was shown at the GAYS AND BROADCASTING confer-

Bisexual nurse kicked out of the army

Tim joined the army in 1980 aged seventeen and trained as a nurse at Aldershot. At the time he was engaged and didn't identify as gay.

In March 1982 he was summoned to an interview with the Special Investigation Branch of the Military Police, after another interviewee had suggested that Tim might be gay. He was questioned for four hours one day and six hours the next. Extremely upset he wrote to his parents that he was going to commit suicide.

His mother telephoned the Commanding Officer demanding to know what was going on. Neither he nor the Personnel Officer knew anything about it. Tim met his mother and promised that he would not commit suicide.

In 1983 he was posted to Munster

where he met Dave, an army cook who was being court martialled for homosexual behaviour. They started a gay relationship - Tim's first.

In September 1983 he moved to the Princess Alexandra Hospital at Swindon. He knew no gay people there and felt very isolated. During an SIB investigation into drugs Tim's room was searched and evidence that he might be gay was found.

He was interrogated for eight hours one day and a further seven hours the next. Eventually he admitted to being bisexual and to his relationship with Dave. He was asked for full details of all the sexual acts he had engaged in but refused to give these.

He returned to work on his ward.

A senior officer, after being told what had happened, complained angrily that the SIB "witch hunts" for drug users and "poofs" had depleted his staff to the point where it was difficult to run the wards.

Tim heard nothing further for six months during which time he had been posted to Northern Ireland. One day he was summoned to his Admin Officer and told that he was to be discharged for homosexual behaviour. His discharge papers, marked "Services no longer required", state that his military conduct was exemplary, that he was always immaculate in uniform, that he had performed his duties in a satisfactory manner and that he maintained good relationships with patients and colleagues.

Longest running bisexual women's group

The longest running bisexual women's group has been meeting for two years now. And we've gone public - every first Monday of the month at The Drill Hall, Chenies Street, WC1.

We wanted to meet as a women's group for many reasons, one of the most important being that we were all feminists. We felt our sexuality was unacceptable to the women's movement, as well as to heterosexual society. There were contradictions we needed to talk

about, and there was support to be gained, which would not have been possible in the presence of men. Even though we recognised that some of our problems/ joys we have in common with bisexual men, others are specific to women. We needed to find out how to reconcile wanting to give energy to women with giving energy to men.

It's very heartening to see how many women see themselves as bisexual. The way we've experienced our sexuality has also been di-

verse; but whether our present experience is of celibacy, lesbianism, heterosexuality, monogamy or non-monogamy, or a combination of these, it is our feelings, emotions and attractions which make us bisexual.

The meetings are friendly, and give women the opportunity to talk about their sexuality in a supportive atmosphere. They'll also have a lot of fun.

SUE GEORGE

Let's abolish these categorizing terms

I don't often go to parties. I don't like having to give just a little of myself to a lot of people; the inevitable superficiality; the noise, bustle, heat and loud music. Wow! I once went 12 years without suffering these aspects of parties. But here I was at a farewell shindig for a couple of friends about to go roughing it for two or three weeks in Africa, and I'd succumbed - felt duty-bound.

Neil drifted over, as I'd hoped (and secretly known) he would. A little earlier we'd exchanged 4-yard-apart hellos and waves; now we were just easing our way into a chat when suddenly he hit me amiably with, "So what are you, John - gay or bisexual? I mean, you don't mind me asking do you? Say if you do?"

It was good that he felt he could ask me a straight (sorry for the pun) question like this. We'd been talking about orientation with a woman feminist friend a few days before, and he'd obviously been thinking things over. This

was a mixed party, by the way, both in terms of gender and orientation. (Well, aren't they all?)

In answer to Neil's question, what am I? - homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual (or non-sexual?) let's take the sliding scale. In these terms I'd be graded 8 or 9 right now - ie, attracted mainly to men (my own sex), but with always the vague possibility of taking off with a woman. And tomorrow - who knows where I'd be graded then?

How about the terms - heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual? I don't like them because:

- a) they sound medical
- b) they suggest lust, sexual activity, with a lack of emotional involvement.

"OK," you say, "how about 'gay'?" Ridiculous! For a start I love the word 'gay' in its correct usage - I imagine flowers, sunshine, laughter, happiness, fun, young children carefree in the countryside, celebration of life. So sometimes homosexuals do have times like that (so does everyone

else lucky enough), but are we capable only of frivolity? I hope not, although the Gay Scene certainly promotes this image to society in general, more's the pity. Perhaps this word 'gay' is one small reason society doesn't take us seriously, even in certain 'liberal' cliques.

Maybe just around the corner is a Parliamentary bill outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The chance for everyone to be openly somewhere on the sliding scale 1-10 (and sexual or non-sexual) could be closer than we dream of. If it does happen, let's abolish all these categorizing terms and not make assumptions about ourselves or others.

I'm happy to wait until I meet someone, woman or man, and see how I feel about them as an individual. Such a variety is available within a relationship that we shouldn't go into one with expectations, but keep an open mind and let things happen.

JOHN EDMUNDS

GUARDIAN ARTICLE

Open Space (page 24) in the Guardian on Tuesday February 18th featured an article "Double Trouble". David Berry of the Guardian interviewed four members of the London Bisexual Group, Kate Fearnley, Diana Suggate, David Smith and David Burkle. All had a nice picture of themselves exhibited across an eighth of a whole Guardian page.

The interview came across as genuine and actual quotes were used in the article. Kate Fearnley "I had to come out twice, first as a lesbian,

then as a bisexual. The second time was by far the more difficult". This quote was the source of the term 'Double trouble'. David Burkle on the London bisexual group, "It is clear that there are needs not being met by any other group, we have had over 5000 calls, often from people who have not been able to talk with anyone before".

David Smith's work on the Bi-Monthly magazine received praise in the article, "he has given the magazine a strong journalistic style", says Berry.

Anyone reading the article might see the term 'Double Trouble' referring to attacks on bisexuals from straight and gay society. This impression comes across when you read ideas like, "bringing AIDS into the straight world, the so called Bridging group", or gay anger over, "the bisexuals privilege to slip back into heterosexuality when the going gets tough"... Two very real views, except I think the aim of the article should have been to unite gay and straight sexualities. By stating the divisions gay and straight, this seemed only to isolate bisexuals. This is sad, because bisexuality should be a behaviour that encompasses all sexualities.

Apart from this, we should thank David Berry for his article which gave an excellent introduction to anyone reading about bisexuality for the first time. It gave pride to us all, a feeling that we were beginning to be recognised at last. It also gave the Bi-Monthly a wonderful free advertisement.

R O'Connor

GROUP NEWS

The Guardian article has had a dramatic affect on the morale of the London Bisexual Group. We now feel as though we deserve respect from the Gay Community. We now command the interest from more people, gay and straight prepared to be identified as bisexual. If you look at the group diary, we have visits from well known celebrities of both left and right in politics. Peter Tatchell, left activist and Mathew Parrish, ex-MP conservative. Maybe we could become a platform where straight meet gay, where the whole subject of human sexuality is debated in a less hostile and nervous way.

Numbers attending the Fallen Angel have risen slightly and, what is even more encouraging, the balance of the group is changing: more people are coming regularly and the percentage of women has risen sharply. This has been due to a deliberate change in planning to try to have meetings which are relevant to both sexes. It is beginning to be possible to start a fresh dialogue between different points of view which we hope will strengthen and take us beyond sectarian sexual politics.

In the future, we aim to explore all the perspectives on Bisexuality. Monogomy, personal responsibility in relationship, The Arts, Pop cultures, Fashion, new genders etc.... We are inviting leading characters in these fields to show the links between sexuality and humanity.

CONFERENCE

Fourth. National Conference

The Fourth National Conference will take place on 12th and 13th July at the MARY WARD CENTRE 42 QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON WC1.

We are a group of women who have taken on the organising of the next conference. We are planning a rather different structure from previous conferences which will include but extend out from the usual discussion format. We all have many other aspects to our lives and we hope that making space for such things as music, drama artwork and massage will be enjoyable and also help deepen our understanding of our sexuality and related issues, such as power, image and choice.

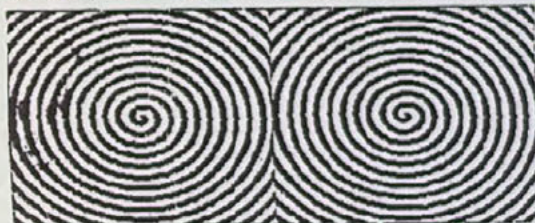
We want to make an opportunity for creative energy to flow and be released.

Please contact us with offers of help: skills you would be willing to share, suggestions for discussion topics, workshop ideas, assistance in the creche, accommodation and so on.

CONTACT: DIANA : 888 9500

LINDA : BM BI, LONDON WC1 3XX

The Booking Form, disabled access details and an outline program will appear in the next issue.



BI BI DAVID

David Smith has resigned as Editor of this magazine. Having attended a course in professional journalism, he is moving on to make a career of it.

FIVE YEARS FROM NOW

The next five years will see many changes to the Lesbian and Gay scene. Judging by what has happened in the USA we can expect quite a lot of dramatic events. Most of them have been bad, but for Bisexuals it could be a new beginning, a new hope for the middle position. A new tolerance of all forms of sexuality, well who knows?

We are inviting you the readership, to write in to this magazine with your predictions for the next five years.

Here are some suggestions;- (good)

- A cure for AIDS
- Gay marriage
- Break down of sex roles
- Escalating AID deaths (bad)
- Identity cards for gays, lesbians
- Closing down of clubs, venues
- Increased employment discrimination

So please get writing, we would be very interested to hear what you expect. Keep text to under 500 words please.



LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP DIARY

The LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP meets at Thé FALLEN ANGEL, 65, Graham Street, N1 at 8.00 for 8.30pm every Monday. The nearest tube is ANGEL.



MARCH

Monday	17th	Being different. - Workshop Rachel O'Connor
Monday	24th	Coming out Liz Berryman
Monday	31st	Social

APRIL

Monday	7th	Discussion on Patriarchy
Sunday	13th	PLANNING MEETING at FALLEN ANGEL 2.00 pm
Monday	14th	Peter Tatchel Non-nuclear army
Monday	21st	Mathew Parris Westminster to TV
Monday	28th	Chris Steven Traveller's tales

MAY

Monday	5th	No meeting
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THE FALLEN ANGEL HOW TO GET THERE



SPY

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act which legalised homosexual acts between consenting men in private never applied to the Armed Forces, where Section 69 of the Queen's Regulations forbids 'conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline'. This sweeping phrase is often used to discipline and dismiss gay and bisexual men.

Lesbianism is not specifically banned by a regulation but an internal memo, 'Female Homosexuality in the Army', describes what is perfectly legal in civilian society as 'unacceptable', 'detrimental to unit discipline and morale' and grounds for dismissal.

A Select Committee of the House of Commons is currently undertaking the detailed work of the five-yearly review of the Queen's Regulations. One working session will concentrate on homosexuality in the Armed Forces and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality will no doubt present lengthy evidence of injustice, discrimination and maltreatment suffered by lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

The recent acquittal in the 'Cyprus Spy Trial' of the five airmen and two soldiers and the consequent investigation into their interrogation by the Special Investigations Branch (SIB) of the Military Police sharply focusses the problem. There are many suggestions that the powers of the SIB are too wide. They can search personal lockers without a warrant, intercept mail and telephone calls, carry out surveillance of off-duty personnel, perform strip searches and intimate body inspections and arrange for interviews by psychiatrists.

The accused in the Cyprus Trial claimed that their confessions to espionage and false statements about their sexuality had been given under duress during gruelling interrogation by the SIB.

And yet there are worse consequences of these homophobic regulations. In the week following the arrest of the 'Cyprus spies' Corporal John Fanning (quoted in CITY LIMITS 216 22-28 Nov., 85) was the subject of an investigation by the SIB. Under interrogation he named one of his senior officers with whom he had had sexual relations. The officer, serving in Northern Ireland, was married with children. Fanning claims that the officer was confronted with the allegations of his bisexuality and that a few days later the officer committed suicide while on a training exercise in the South of England. Labour MP, Harry Cohen has demanded a military investigation into the mysterious circumstances surrounding the officer's death.

The Select Committee considered the issue of homosexuality on February 19th. Ministry of Defence officials refused to deviate from the opinion that the presence of gay people in the Armed Forces was disruptive and dangerous.

A spokesman for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality Nick Billingham thought that Tory members of the Committee were under orders to curtail the discussion. He felt that the Conservatives and the MoD were unwilling to talk about anything touching on the very sensitive issue of the Cyprus spy trial. And there would seem to be very little chance of a change in the legal situation.

The Tories had decided not to accept as evidence to the Committee a 17-page report by CHE which documents cases of ill-treatment of service men and women. On page 22 we recount one of the harrowing stories contained in that report.